Five suspects killed in two encounters

By Our Correspondent

TOBA TEK SINGH: Five suspected outlaws were killed in two encounters.

Reports said two alleged robbers were killed in an encounter with Warburton police near Kanjriwala Bagh in Nankana Sahib district late on Tuesday night.

Sub-inspector Muhammad Waqas Anwar claimed in his FIR that he was leading a police party when he received a call that four outlaws have looted cash, mobile phone and other valuables from the caller and police chased them near Kanjriwala Bagh. As soon as they saw the police, they opened fire which was also returned. After firing stopped, police found two of them injured while two others escaped. Both the injured were shifted to Nankana Sahib DHQ hospital where they succumbed to their wounds. They received bullets 'fired by their accomplices.' Both were identified as Samiullah alias Manzoor Jhoori and Dilawar Abbas who were declared proclaimed offenders by four courts and wanted in about 100 robbery and theft cases in Faisalabad, Sheikhupura, Sargodha and Nankana Sahib districts. Police are conducting raids to arrest their escaped accomplice Muhammad Nazim and an unidentified companion.

Meanwhile, three outlaws were killed in an encounter with Lahore Model Town CCD police team in Mandi Faizabad, Nankana, while two others managed their escape.

During an encounter with Nishatabad police in Faisalabad, a robber identified as Amir Khan, involved in 23 robbery cases, was arrested in an injured condition.

Police claimed that SI Shehzad Ahmed along with his team was taking Amir Khan to recover the stolen goods on his indication. When they reached near Omega City, four gunmen opened fire on the police party and freed the suspect. They fled to Jhumra Bypass on Sargodha Road. On being informed, SHO Nishatabad Imran Amir reached the spot with a contingent. After exchange of fire, police found Amir Khan lying injured critically, who was hit by the bullets of his own accomplices who fled taking advantage of the darkness. The injured suspect was shifted to the Allied hospital.

Farmers see 2025 'worst year' for agriculture

LAHORE: Pakistan's agriculture sector faced its worst year in history in 2025, dealing a severe blow to the economy and food security, farmers said on Wednesday.

Threatening a farmers' protest in the provincial capital on Jan 5, Pakistan Kisan Ittehad President Khalid Khokhar told a press conference that they were denied fair wheat prices despite assurances from the provincial leadership, resulting in losses estimated at Rs22 billion over two years, which also impacted other crops.

He said there was a sharp decline in fertiliser use due to high compost prices, leading to reduced yields. Potato, kinnow and sugarcane growers described their situation as dire, saying production costs were not recovered. Wheat bought from farmers at around Rs1,900 per maund was allegedly sold to end consumers at nearly Rs4,000, fueling anger among growers, he added.

He accused the government of siding with 'mafias' rather than farmers, warning that when fair prices were paid in the past, agricultural growth remained positive, but the current pricing crisis has pushed growth into negative territory. Exports of several crops have also declined significantly.

He said Pakistan is the only country where agriculture is politicised, while elsewhere governments and opposition jointly frame farm policies. He warned that agriculture and farmers are now "on a ventilator" and announced they were being forced to move towards protests.

Highlighting regional disparities, he claimed that fertiliser costs in Pakistan are far higher than in neighbouring India, and raised concerns over future water shortages amid reports of dam construction on the Chenab River by New Delhi. He reiterated farmers' support for national institutions while urging immediate policy intervention to save agriculture from collapse. — Staff Reporter

LAHORE: A vendor prepares tea which is in high demand to fight cold. — Online

PA broaches federal 'overreach' in provincial executive

Motion questions practice of appointing federally-controlled officers to key provincial posts; House forges 'rare' consensus on provincial control over bureaucracy

By Amjad Mahmood

LAHORE: In an important institutional step, the Punjab Assembly on Wednesday took up its first formal debate on 'federal encroachment' on provincial executive authority, marking a significant moment in Pakistan's constitutional and governance discourse.

The discussion ensued an adjournment motion jointly moved by Ahmad Iqbal Chaudhary, Amjad Ali Javed, Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Shaukat Raja, Ahmad Khan Leghari, Iftikhar Hussain Chachar and seven other MPAs, reflecting consensus on the urgency and gravity of the issue.

The motion questioned the long-standing practice of appointing federally controlled officers to key provincial posts, arguing that such arrangements are inconsistent with the spirit of the 18th Constitutional Amendment and undermine the concept of a federal constitutional order.

While allowing discussion on the motion, Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan observed that the matter was of great constitutional importance, and welcomed the fact that the provincial legislature was finally engaging with core questions of federalism, governance, and executive authority that have remained unresolved for decades.

Presenting the motion, MPA Chaudhary emphasised that true administrative federalism requires provinces to exercise effective control over their own administrative cadres. He stated that while provinces are held accountable for governance outcomes, they continue to lack decisive authority over postings, transfers, and disciplinary control of officers implementing provincial policy.

He noted that the purpose of initiating this debate was not confrontation, but reform.

He remarked that unless Pakistan addresses the persistence of a centralised, colonial-era governance model, meaningful improvements in service delivery and accountability will remain elusive. "This debate is necessary if we are serious about reforming a rotten governance system and aligning it with constitutional spirit," he said.

Members from both treasury and opposition benches invoked the Objectives Resolution, the Preamble of the Constitution, and Articles 99(3) and 133(3) to argue that executive authority must rest with the elected provincial government, and that administrative arrangements must flow from constitutional principles rather than legacy practices.

Several members also highlighted that the Punjab Government Rules of Business, 2011, were found to be misaligned with the spirit of the Constitution, particularly in relation to executive authority and administrative accountability, further complicating effective provincial governance.

The opposition benches fully supported the motion, underscoring that administrative federalism is not a partisan issue but a constitutional imperative central to democratic governance, provincial autonomy, and institutional efficiency.

PTI's Ijaz Shafi remarked that "we are in complete support of this and administrative autonomy at the provincial level will lead to the rule of law in the country."

Given the depth of interest and seriousness of the matter, the speaker directed the government to furnish a formal response and fixed the issue for further discussion in the next assembly session.

Tariq Malik, former president of Pakistan Administrative Service, asserts that after the 1973 Constitution, not a single federal servant could be lawfully appointed in any province. Referring to the reply submitted by the Services & General Administration Department (S&GAD) to the Punjab Assembly in response to the adjournment motion, he said both the Civil Service of Pakistan Rules, 1954, and the so-called post-sharing formula devised between PAS and PMS by Moeen Qureshi's caretaker government in 1993 were in violation of the constitution.

According to him, only the provincial house had the authority to appoint and regulate civil servants in a province squarely rests with provincial assemblies under Articles 240(b) and 242 of the Constitution, making any federal role in postings - from chief secretary to assistant commissioner - constitutionally untenable. In Punjab, this requirement has already been fulfilled through the Punjab Civil Servants Act, 1974, rendering old federal administrative frameworks irrelevant.

He termed the continued involvement of the federal Establishment Division in provincial appointments, cadre control and service management as a constitutional overreach, violating the principles of division of powers and multiple constitutional provisions.

A sharp distinction has also been drawn between the Provincial Management Service (PMS), established under provincial law, and the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), which is based on a pre-constitutional administrative framework. The posting of PAS officers on provincial posts amounts to encroachment on provincial autonomy.

He also draws attention to Article 242, which assigns recruitment for federal services to the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) and for provincial services to provincial public service commissions. "Legal analysts question how provincial posts are being filled through the CSS examination conducted by the FPSC, calling it a clear constitutional violation."

Police helpline calls fall by half

Report claims remarkable decline in crime across the province

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: A report claimed that the overall calls received on the police helpline 15 almost halved in December 2025 compared to the same period last year.

A spokesperson for the Punjab Police shared the report on Wednesday and said that in December 2025, calls related to robberies had decreased by 59 percent, while calls related to street robberies saw a 51 percent reduction.

Similarly, calls regarding vehicle theft showed a 55 percent reduction, including a 73 percent decrease in car theft calls and a 54 percent decrease in motorcycle theft calls.

Compared to December of the previous year, calls reporting vehicle snatching incidents decreased by 71 percent, while car snatching calls dropped by 46 percent. Calls reporting motorcycle snatching incidents also showed a significant reduction of 72 percent. Calls related to murder incidents decreased by 36 percent, and abduction cases saw a 31 percent decline compared to December 2024. Additionally, calls related to burglary and theft also recorded a 33 percent decline during the same period.

Punjab Police spokesperson further said that this year, registered cases of gang rape against women decreased by 44 percent compared to the previous year, which clearly reflected effective actions by the police and the enforcement of the law.

Punjab Inspector General of Police Dr Usman Anwar said that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz had provided Punjab Police with the resources to make the province safe. He added that the scope of the Safe Cities Project was now being expanded from cities to the tehsil level.

The IG said that the declining trend in 15 calls related to serious crimes and street crime reflected an overall improvement in Punjab Police's performance. He further said that free registration of crimes was being ensured at all police stations across the province, and that the sole focus of Punjab Police remained the protection of citizens' life and properties and the suppression of criminals.

Govt launches reforms to modernise agri markets

LAHORE: The Punjab government has launched reforms initiative at agriculture markets to transform traditional market operations into a transparent, efficient, and farmer- and consumer-friendly system.

Punjab Price Control and Commodities Management department secretary Dr Kiran Khurshid said here on Wednesday that the Punjab Agricultural Marketing Regulatory Authority (PAMRA) was implementing the reforms to modernise and digitalise agricultural markets across the province.

She said the reforms were focusing on streamlining the regulatory framework through necessary legal amendments, the establishment of a dedicated engineering wing, and the implementation of a comprehensive human resource plan. "These measures are intended to ensure improved governance, infrastructure provision, and institutional sustainability," Dr Khurshid said.

As part of the digitisation process, the secretary told Dawn that the PAMRA was introducing geotagging to monitor markets and stakeholders, enabling real-time information sharing. She said Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) had been implemented in all 188 markets across the province comprising 92 fruit and vegetable markets and 96 grain markets.

She said additional measures included improvements in cleanliness and drainage systems, installation of SMD screens at divisional headquarters and electronic rate boards at the tehsil level, branding of "Chief Minister Kissan Bazaars" at main entrances, establishment of help desks, use of body cameras to monitor auctions in Lahore markets, and provision of standardised wholesale rate list stands to ensure price transparency.

As a result of financial reforms, she said PAMRA reported a 130 per cent increase in revenue through the outsourcing of market fees, parking, and rate list rights. **— Staff Reporter**

Punjab finally decides to allow Basant in Lahore only

Home department had previously instructed all commissioners and DCs to start registering twine and kite manufacturers across the province

By Mansoor Malik

LAHORE: The Punjab government has finally decided to only celebrate a limited Basant festival in Lahore, whereas kite-flying will remain banned in other parts of the province.

As per details, the Lahore deputy commissioner had issued a notification to hold a three-day Basant in Lahore from Feb 6, while the rest of the deputy commissioners of the province were expected to follow suit.

However, the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order that met at the home department on Wednesday, decided that Basant would only be held in Lahore and that too at a limited scale.

Though there was no need for all divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners to be present at the meeting, sources in the home department told *Dawn* that they had been invited to attend the meeting through video-link particularly for the "Basant agenda".

Punjab Home Secretary Dr Ahmad Javed Qazi told the cabinet committee meeting: "The provincial cabinet had allowed limited Basant on Feb 6, 7 and 8 in Lahore only," and kite-flying would remain banned elsewhere in the province under the "Kite Flying Regulations Bill 2025".

Though the Lahore deputy commissioner had notified a three-day Basant in Lahore on Monday without entailing any location restrictions, implying that the festival would be allowed across the Lahore district.

A divisional commissioner, on the condition of anonymity, told *Dawn* that a security agency representative also told the meeting that Basant would not be allowed across the district but only at a limited scale.

It may be mentioned that the home department had held multiple meetings on the revival of Basant and had proposed that Basant be allowed at specific grounds, or specifically notified rooftops including in the Walled City or other locations across the district. The home department had also instructed all divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners to start registering twine and kite manufacturers to ensure notified specifications for the Basant material.

The divisional commissioner also said that the government was actually piloting the Basant festival in Lahore. He asserted that it was a chance for the people of Lahore to show responsibility and follow restrictions to revive Basant in the rest of the province. "People should watch their neighbourhoods and ensure that no illegality is committed and there should be no human injury in the best interest of the Basant festival," he said.

Expressing apprehension, the commissioner said that any serious accident during the festival might lead to government bashing – leading to banning Basant for good.

Despite celebrating a limited basant in Lahore, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has directed plying buses and rickshaws on city roads for free to minimise the use of motorcycles on Lahore roads. It is learnt that the government might use the buses of colleges and universities during Basant days to facilitate citizens.

The cabinet committee meeting also expressed deep concern over incidents of illegal kite-flying and injuries to passersby in some areas.

Eventually, the home department wrote a letter to all commissioners, RPOs, DCs, CPOs and DPOs in the province on Wednesday seeking action against all those violating the Punjab Regulation of Kite Flying Ordinance 2025. The home department showed concern in the letter that illegal kite flying was being observed in certain parts of the province. It stated that incidents were being reported in which injuries to passerby had occurred due to this activity.

It said, "such practices pose a serious threat to human life and public safety". The home department said that action against law violators could include arrest of manufacturers, suppliers of kite flying material and persons involved in kite flying, in accordance with the law – under intimation to the department.

The cabinet committee's 46th meeting, chaired by its Chairman Khawaja Salman Rafique had also instructed fool-proof security arrangements for the New Year's night besides launching strict action against those involved in aerial firing, hooliganism and one-wheeling.

The meeting also approved extension in deployment of Rangers in Mianwali, Attock, and DG Khan.